

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An apparatus for retrieving data related to a data cartridge contained in a media storage system, comprising:
 - a cartridge access device operatively associated with said media storage system, said cartridge access device retrieving and transporting the data cartridge within the media storage system;
 - a transponder mounted to said data cartridge, said transponder transmitting a data signal containing said data related to the data cartridge;
 - a reader mounted to said cartridge access device, said reader receiving said transmitted data signal from said transponder; and
- 10 a controller operatively associated with said reader, said controller operating said reader to activate and query said transponder to transmit said data signal, said control system being responsive to said transmitted data signal.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said cartridge access device comprises a cartridge plunge mechanism moveable between a retracted position and an extended position and wherein said reader is mounted to said cartridge plunge mechanism.
3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein said cartridge plunge mechanism further comprises a thumb portion, and said reader is attached to said thumb portion.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said controller operates said reader to activate and query said transponder when said cartridge access device is positioned adjacent the data cartridge to be queried.
5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said transponder comprises a passive transponder, and wherein said reader activates said passive transponder so that said passive transponder transmits said data signal, said reader

being responsive to said transmitted data signal.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said transponder comprises an active transponder.
7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said transponder is a radio frequency identification (RFID) transponder.
8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein said RFID transponder stores up to four kilobytes of said data related to the data cartridge.
9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said reader activates and queries said transponder to transmit said data signal when positioned approximately three millimeters apart from one another.
10. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said data related to the data cartridge includes at least cartridge identification data.
11. A method for retrieving data related to a data cartridge in a media storage system, comprising:
positioning a cartridge access device adjacent said data cartridge;
transmitting a data signal containing said data related to the data cartridge from a transponder attached to said data cartridge; and
receiving said transmitted data signal at a reader attached to said cartridge access device.
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12. The method of claim 11, further comprising writing at least a portion of said data related to the data cartridge to said transponder.
13. The method of claim 11, further comprising activating said transponder.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein said transponder is activated when said reader is positioned approximately three millimeters from said transponder.
15. The method of claim 13, further comprising deactivating said transponder.
16. The method of claim 11, further comprising forming an air interface between said reader and said transponder, wherein said data is transmitted over said air interface.
17. The method of claim 11, further comprising querying said transponder to transmit said data.
18. The method of claim 11, further comprising processing said transmitted data signal at a controller operatively associated with said reader.
19. An apparatus for retrieving data related to a data cartridge in a media storage system, comprising:
 - means for storing said data attached to said data cartridge;
 - means for reading said data positionable adjacent said means for storing;5 and
 - means for transmitting said data from said means for storing to said means for reading.
20. The apparatus of claim 19, further comprising means for processing said transmitted data operatively associated with said means for reading.